

# 1      Husserl's Theory of Signs Revisited

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Husserl's theory of signs is best known under the form it was given in the First *Logical Investigation*, which is entitled "Expression and Meaning." A renewed interest in this early text of Husserl was created by the publication of Derrida's *Speech and Phenomena*.<sup>1</sup> In this careful and yet impetuous interpretation of Husserl's First Investigation, Derrida is especially attentive to the hidden presuppositions and problematic consequences belonging to Husserl's phenomenological approach to the sign. The determination of the sign in the First Investigation is made a test case against which to measure the philosophical ambition, method and anticipatory decisions guiding Husserl's entire phenomenological enterprise.<sup>2</sup> Such an interpretation seems somewhat arbitrary so long as one does not prove: (1) that the First Investigation actually offers Husserl's most typical and most systematic account of the sign; and (2) that the sign must be understood as a condition of phenomenality allowing phenomena to show themselves rather than as a particular phenomenon.

These two questions also indicate what is at stake in the present essay. On the one hand I want to show how a few years after the publication of the First Investigation Husserl criticized and thoroughly modified the analysis of the sign he had offered in his earlier text. On the other hand it will be shown that this important progress in the description of the sign is due principally to a progress achieved elsewhere, that is to say in the phenomenological understanding of intersubjective empathy, of the ideality of linguistic meaning, of intentional acts of will, desire, tendency, etc., and eventually also in the

1. J. Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena. And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*. David B. Allison, trans. (Evanston, 1973).

2. Cf. R. Bernet, "Differenz und Anwesenheit. Derridas und Husserls Phänomenologie der Sprache, der Zeit, der Geschichte, der wissenschaftlichen Rationalität," *Studien zur neueren französischen Philosophie. Phänomenologische Forschungen*, vol. 18 (1986), pp. 51–112.



understanding of the phenomenological reduction and of its relation to acts of phantasy. The sign thus appears to be a non-independent object of phenomenological investigation; it gathers many other phenomena and it therefore can possibly be taken as revealing phenomena and their phenomenological apprehension rather than as being a particular phenomenon itself. This dependency on the phenomenological analysis of other phenomena and this disclosure of the foundations of phenomenology itself is something the sign has in common with temporality.<sup>3</sup> With regard to Derrida's critical interpretation of the First Investigation, we must examine not only whether Husserl's new theory of signs meets the critique Derrida has addressed to the former theory, but also whether this improved account of the sign is due to any radical change in the understanding of the phenomenological method and of the primary object of phenomenological endeavor.

Husserl's new theory of signs was developed in the year 1913 and even more fully in 1914, shortly after the publication of Book I of the *Ideas*. The best of Husserl's work in this period was devoted to a revision of the *Logical Investigations*. This led to the publication, in 1913, of a second edition of Parts I and II/1 of the *Investigations*. The revision of Part II/2, which contains the Sixth Investigation, quickly grew out of proportion and led both to a thorough correction of the original text and to the writing of four new and independent texts. These four texts are entitled: (1) "Expression and Sign" (*Ausdruck und Zeichen*), (2) "Modification of Empiress" (*Leermodifikation*), (3) "Possibility and Consciousness of Possibility" (*Möglichkeit und Möglichkeitbewusstsein*), (4) "Evidence and Truth" (*Evidenz und Wahrheit*). While the second edition of the Sixth Investigation appeared in 1921, the four separate texts just mentioned remained unpublished.

These four texts, together with complementary unpublished materials from the same period, are expected to be published shortly in Volume XX of the *Husserliana*, entitled *Logische Untersuchungen: Entwurf zur Umarbeitung der VI Untersuchung. Texte aus dem Nachlass, 1911–17*. The volume will be edited by Felix Belussi. Text (1), "Expression and Sign," grew out of a revision of the first sections in Chapter One of the Sixth Investigation. It develops a new theory of the sign, often in the form of a direct criticism of the doctrine of the First Investigation. This new theory of the sign is worked out also in a more thorough and yet more fragmentary way in many of the complementary texts to be published in Volume XX of *Husserliana*. My presentation of

Husserl's new theory of signs is based mainly on these complementary texts and, to some extent, also on text (1), "Expression and Sign." Both series of texts will be referred to as "Texts of 1914."

My presentation of these "Texts of 1914" is by no means complete and my discussion of their philosophical contribution is often inspired by questions which are foreign to Husserl's own preoccupations. My wish is to awaken the reader's interest in these very important texts rather than to present him with a close commentary and interpretation of texts which, unfortunately, are not yet available to the public. The fact that I want to confront the "Texts of 1914" with the First Investigation, published in 1901, and with Derrida's discussion thereof has imposed further limitations on my research. I hardly pay any attention to the fact, for example, that in Husserl's mind the phenomenological investigation of the sign belongs to the larger context of the intentional reference to an object or state of affairs, and also to the context of doxic modalities and degrees of intuitive fulfillment of this intentional reference. My interest therefore focuses more on the relation between the sensuous sign and its meaning rather than on the truth-value of a meaningful sign.

However, such an analysis of the meaningful sign understood as relation between (sensuous) signifier and (spiritual) signified bears highly rewarding results and is already more than one can reasonably expect to treat in an article. Husserl looks at this relation between the sensuous sign and its spiritual meaning from different perspectives: he investigates the difference between genuine signs and mere indications, between lingual and non-lingual genuine signs, between a communicative and a solitary use of lingual signs; he also describes how the apprehension of a sensuous sign leads to the apprehension of its meaning in virtue of a passively undergone tendency and of a pre-given familiarity with a linguistic code; and he eventually examines the appearance of the sensuous sign-phenomenon or sign-token, its real or fictional presence, its givenness together with an ideal sign-pattern or sign-type. My own contribution to all this consists mainly in repeatedly and untiringly questioning the standpoint from which, and the light in which, Husserl looks into all these phenomena.

# 1. WHAT IS A SIGN?

Surprisingly enough, Husserl's First Investigation does not approach in direct fashion the question concerning the nature of the sign as such. Husserl rather begins his investigation by contrasting two sorts of signs with one another: *expressions* (*Ausdrücke*) and *indica-*

3. Cf. R. Bernet, "Einleitung," in E. Husserl, *Texte zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins* (1893–1917), R. Bernet, editor (Hamburg, 1985), esp. pp. XIV–XVI.



ions (*Anzeichen*). In *Speech and Phenomena* Derrida takes both the incapacity to directly approach the nature of the sign as such and the decision to start from a dual opposition between two sorts of signs to be inspired by metaphysical presuppositions. According to Derrida the sign is a "trace" of other signs, a substitute for a presence out of reach, and it therefore irremediably eludes the appropriation by a Metaphysics of Presence. Quite to the contrary, Husserl's distinction between two sorts of signs and his worshipping of expressions are said to fit into a strategy which takes signs to be faithfully mirroring representatives of the inner presence of the meaning and of the outer presence of the intentional referent. This network of Derrida's interpretation is rather wide-meshed but I think that it does catch some of the hidden metaphysical presuppositions in the way the First Investigation understands the nature of the sign (and mainly of the linguistic sign). To find out whether the new theory of the sign elaborated in the "Texts of 1914" still falls prey to such a deconstructive interpretation is one of the tasks I pursue in the following investigation. The main task, however, remains to account in detail for the refinements of Husserl's theory of the sign without making it all a matter of presence and absence alone.

A careful reading that is not a mere hunt for so-called metaphysical, dual oppositions discovers that not only the "Texts of 1914" but already the *Logical Investigations* actually distinguish at least three sorts of signs: (1) *natural signs* such as "fossil vertebrae indicating the existence of prediluvian animals"; (2) *non-lingual artificial signs* such as "marks" (e.g. "a flag," "a brand") and "memorial signs" (e.g. "the much used knot in the handkerchief"); (3) *lingual artificial signs* which are called "expressions." Non-lingual artificial signs (=2) and lingual artificial signs (=3) have in common the capacity to signify (*Bezeichnen*). Natural signs (=1) do not signify and therefore are not to be taken as "genuine signs." The *Investigations* say that only those signs signify which are "deliberately brought about" and this remark still guides Husserl's further investigation into the function of signifying in 1914. The texts of 1901 and 1914 also agree on calling natural signs (=1) "indications" and lingual artificial signs (=3) "expressions." Basically, they agree about the determination of how both, indications and expressions, work, although the texts written in 1914 are much more explicit in explaining this.

The only fundamental disagreement concerns the non-lingual artificial signs (=2) such as signals, marks, memorial signs, etc. The *Logical Investigations* call them "indications," just like the natural signs (=1) and furthermore pretend that both sorts of signs are related in the

same way to what they stand for. The "Texts of 1914," on the contrary, call these non-lingual artificial signs (=2) "genuine signs," just like the lingual "expressions" (=3), and furthermore explain that both have a common (although differentiated) way to "signify," that is, to "point to" (*Hinweisen*) the signified, to what they mean. This disagreement seems to be due mainly to the fact that the *Logical Investigations*, out of epistemological and metaphysical prejudices, consider only lingual expressions (=3) to function as genuine signs. In 1914, the non-lingual artificial signs (=2), far from being taken as indications, function as paradigmatic cases for all genuine signs including the lingual expressions (=3). Both texts, however, basically agree about the functional characteristics of indications and genuine signs and about their difference. This is what I want to begin with.

The First Investigation gives a precise definition of the relation between the *indicative sign* and what it indicates: "... Certain objects or states of affairs of whose reality someone has actual knowledge indicate to him the reality of certain other objects or states of affairs, in the sense that his belief in the reality of the one is experienced (though not at all evidently) as motivating a belief or surmise in the reality of the other" (§2). In indication, the sign and the signified are *naturally* tied together, whether for physical reasons (when the smoke indicates fire) or for psychological reasons (when, to take an example from Nabokov, through habitual association the perception of a particular person's face always makes me think of a cow's udder). The *Logical Investigations* mainly stress the element of *motivation* which leads from the perception of an empirical thing (taken as an indicative sign) to the *belief* in the *existence* of another empirical thing or state of affairs. This motivation of a belief is said not to be based on evidence; that is, it is based on no cognitive evidence, on no logical inference or necessary relation (§3). In the most common cases the motivation leading from an indicative sign to what it indicates is based on physical causation (perception of smoke leading to belief in the existence of fire) or on an underlying physical identity (perception of fossil vertebrae leading to the belief in the existence of prediluvian animals).

In 1914 Husserl mainly stresses that in indication one is led *directly* from the sign to the signified, i.e. not *via* a meaning-intention. One immediately sees or notices B when seeing A (*Daran-ersehen, daran-merken*). Natural signs (=1) are the best examples of such indications and if "natural" means that a sign refers without any deliberate meaning-intention, then all indications can be said to be natural signs. In this sense the "expression" of a face can also be said to be a natural sign (i.e. an indication), and even a sign that is artificially brought



about can become a natural sign when its meaning vanishes. Contemporary linguists usually are not willing to take natural signs to be signs, because in a sign the signifier and the signified are interdependent in a strong, necessary way, while in a natural sign the signifier is an object of its own and consequently it can be grasped independently of what it signifies (e.g. the smoke without the fire). Natural signs cannot be taken to be genuine signs because the signifier and the signified are in a relation that is physically too close (natural interdependence) and significantly too loose (significant independence). It is for similar reasons that Husserl too, both in 1901 and in 1914, consistently refuses to consider natural signs (indications) to be authentic signs, because their referring does not have the form of a meaningful signifying.

What is this "meaningful signifying" proper to all genuine signs? It first means, negatively, that genuine signs do not signify or significantly refer in virtue of any natural, physical, or psychological link between the sign and its referent. They signify, as one text from 1914 states, without any material basis (*ohne jede sachliche Unterlage*) or, as we could also say, without any *fundamentum in re*. In the case of indications, quite to the contrary, the relation between the indicative sign and its referent has such a *fundamentum in re*, and the indicating is materially founded (*sachlich begründet*).

Genuine signs—and this is their second, positive determination—signify (*bezeichnen*) on the basis of a deliberate decision, on the basis of a will. This will, which is responsible for the signifying proper to genuine signs, actually encloses two decisions. The first decision amounts to a deliberate reference to something, whether in the form of a thought, a memory, or a phantasy. Genuine signs refer to their objects in virtue of an intentional act which Husserl calls their meaning-intention or "significant intention." The second decision consists in deliberately making a sensuous object function as a meaningful sign. Genuine signs, in virtue of an arbitrary personal will or on the basis of a commonly shared conviction or code refer to their meaning. Husserl says that genuine signs refer or "point" (*hinweisen, hinzeigen*) to their meaning in virtue of a "significant intention" and refer to their intentional object in virtue of a "significant intention." Genuine signs emerge from the combination of both decisions; they "significantly" refer to their intentional referent by means of a "significant" "pointing" to their meaning. This twofold intention, this indirect referring is common to all genuine signs. Besides lingual signs, the texts from 1914 list many other sorts of genuine signs: (a) *memorial signs* (e.g. the knot in the handkerchief which I use to remember—as one of Husserl's examples

runs—that I want to be a better man); (b) *marks* (e.g. a scarf that helps people to recognize each other as supporters of the same soccer team); (c) *signals* (e.g. a rotating yellow light on the shore of a lake which tells me that a storm is imminent and that I should return to the harbor with my boat).

All these examples of genuine signs have in common the intentional reference to a state of affairs *via* a meaning and only in virtue of a meaning. This meaning, in its turn, being the meaning of a genuine sign, intentionally refers *via* a sign. Husserl regards the meaning as the decisive component of a genuine sign and therefore usually presents the sign as a medium or as an instrument through which the intentional referring of a meaning is accomplished. Thus a handkerchief helps to keep present my former decision that I should remember to become a better man. However, since a sign signifies only in virtue of its meaning, one can also consider the meaning as a medium through which a sign intentionally refers to what it signifies. To put it more precisely, one must say: (1) that in all signs the sign refers *via* the meaning and the meaning refers *via* the sign; (2) that "referring *via*" has a different sense in both expressions: when a sign refers *via* a meaning, then the meaning provides the sign with an intentional reference; when a meaning refers *via* a sign, then the sign provides the meaning with a sensuously recognizable presence. According to Husserl this is made possible because the sensuous presence of the sign points (*hinweisen*) to the meaning ("significant intention") and the meaning intentionally refers to the object signified ("significant intention"). I shall not enter further into Husserl's phenomenological analysis of the intentional reference and the truth value belonging to this meaning.<sup>4</sup> In the following I shall rather confine myself to a study of the relation between the sensuous sign and its meaning under two correlative aspects: (1) the bestowing of meaning upon a sensuous object which thereby becomes a sign; (2) the experience of a sign and of its pointing to the meaning. Both aspects are given a new and rich development in the texts from 1914, and the following considerations are based mainly on these texts.

To bestow a meaning upon a sensuously given object or, to put it otherwise, to create or to use a meaningful sign is the result of a *voluntary decision*. This was already emphasized in the *Logical Investigations*

4. I have dealt with both problems in two earlier articles: R. Bernet, "Bedeutung und intentionales Bewusstsein. Husserls Begriff des Bedeutungsphänomens," *Studien zur Sprachphänomenologie. Phänomenologische Forschungen*, vol. 8 (1979), pp. 31–64; and R. Bernet, "Logik und Phänomenologie in Husserls Lehre von der Wahrheit," *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, vol. 43 (1981), pp. 35–89.



within the limits of the treatment of lingual signs or "expressions." In his interpretation of the First Investigation in *Speech and Phenomena*, Derrida underlines this voluntary character of the meaning-intention which gives birth to a meaningful expression. He therefore suggests calling the meaning-intention a "will to say" (*vouloir-dire*). With the extension of the class of genuine signs to memorial signs, marks and signals—an extension proper to the texts from 1914—we can say also that memorial signs have their origin in a will to remember, that marks have their origin in a will to make something recognizable as such and such, that signals have their origin in a will to draw attention to something and to make people behave accordingly. This will is responsible both for bringing about a sign and for this sign's pointing in a definite fashion to its meaning. The arbitrary or conventional nature of the genuine sign and its signifying function are both rooted in the same creative will.

In the revised version, from 1914, of the first chapter of the Sixth Investigation, Husserl goes so far as to understand this will in analogy with the kinesthetic "I can." A speech act or an act of writing is just another form of a voluntary bodily movement, an action proceeding from an inner decision and carried out in the outer world. To call the lingual sign the expressive body of a meaning is thus more than just a metaphor for Husserl. Husserl moves here on grounds that Merleau-Ponty has made familiar to us, but seemingly without quite giving up the underlying metaphysical dualism between the spiritual meaning and the physical sign. The expressive will, however, builds a "bridge" between them; it both bestows meaning upon a sign and makes the sign point to its meaning. For Husserl to deliberately create or use a meaningful sign is equivalent to making the sign point to its meaning. He says that to the will (*Wollen*) to make a sensuous object signify corresponds necessarily the obligation (*Sollen*) to turn from the sign to its meaning. This will is usually a will belonging to a person or to a community of persons. Following the pointing from the sensuous sign to its meaning goes along with the awareness to obey a request or a demand (*Zumutung*). We shall see later, however, that especially for lingual signs this will can become an impersonal, anonymous one, and the ensuing obligation may become "unconscious," obeyed in the form of a "blind, habitual tendency."

The experience of a meaningful sign, like the expressive will bringing about a meaningful sign, has both a sensuous and a spiritual aspect which are closely tied together. The spiritual aspect is what both the First Investigation (§10) and the texts from 1914 call the *pointing* (*Hinzeigen, Hinweisen*) of the sensuous appearance to the meaning.

The texts from 1901 and 1914 also agree about the fact that, in virtue of the dominance of this pointing, a sensuous object is not experienced any longer as an autonomous object when it becomes a sign. Husserl's notion of the sign seems almost to coincide with the function of signifying (*Bezeichnen*) and as a consequence he usually prefers to call the sensuous object a "sign-phenomenon" (*Zeichenerscheinung*) rather than a sign. This sensuous sign-phenomenon has the property of catching one's interest, not for its own sake, but for the sake of the meaning to which it points. The experience of the sensuous sign-phenomenon is a "medium," an "instrument" which opens access to the meaning. When the First Investigation states that the word "excites" (*erregt*) a meaning-conferring act (§10), it means something which is directly opposed to the Lockean meaning of this vocabulary. Far from being caused by the material occurrence of the word, the meaning-conferring act is an independent spiritual entity which finds in the experience of the "word-presentation" (*Wortvorstellung*) merely a sensuous "support" (*Stütze, Anhalt*).

This conception of the relation between meaning-intention and sensuous sign leads to a progressive dematerialization of the sign. The First Investigation already hesitates as to whether the sensuous sign is the object of a genuine act of intuitive presentation or not. On the one hand, this seems to be the case, since the meaning-intention is said to be an act founded on another act in which the sensuous sign is experienced (§23). On the other hand, one also finds the following remark: "The word remains intuitively present . . . but we no longer intend it, it no longer properly is the object of our 'mental activity'" (§10). The latter conception is the one which the texts from 1914 consistently develop. These texts insist that the sign is a mere medium experienced not in an objective presentation that terminates in it, but rather in a "medium-intention" (*Intention als Mittel*). What counts is the preservation of this function as a medium and not the physical existence of the sensuous sign. In the later course of our investigation we shall come across another instance of Husserl's dematerialization of the sensuous sign, namely the contention that in certain cases the *phantasy* of a word suffices to accomplish the act of speech or of verbally articulated thought. Husserl's dematerialization of the sign has the consequence that the determination of a meaning through the way different signifiers "horizontally" refer to each other in a "chain of signifiers" or in a con-text is not taken into account. This dematerialization of the sign and the ensuing blindness toward a contextual form of meaning-production are due to a strong *logical* and *psychological* interest which makes Husserl practically reduce the sign to the function of signifying-



ing, and to reduce this function itself to an indirect intentional act of consciousness. In contrast, Heidegger's *ontological* approach to the sign in §17 of *Being and Time*, even if it remains a mere outline without any special consideration of lingual signs, does not miss the phenomenon of contextuality.

Husserl emphasizes that the marginal or transient awareness of the sensuous sign is intimately linked with its "pointing" to the meaning. In 1913 this pointing is also called the "significance" (*Bedeutung*), not to be confused with the *Bedeutung* of the sign. It is basically what makes the sign "signify" (*bezeichnen*). Again, Husserl stresses that this pointing of the sensuous sign to the meaning is not an independent intentional act but rather a mere tendency or an "intention of transition" (*Übergangsintention*). As such it is dependent on both sides (*zweiseitig unselbstständig*): on the experience of the sensuous sign-phenomenon and on the performing of a meaning-intention. Through its pointing the sign-phenomenon leads to the meaning, but without making it present in the form of an object. Thus, the pointing is not properly an intentional act, not even a non-thematic intentional awareness of a horizon. But how then must this pointing, this "combination-form" (*Verbindungsform*), this "intentional layer" (*intentionale Schicht*) be determined? Husserl says that this pointing to the meaning is a "tension" (*Spannung*) one undergoes when experiencing a sign-phenomenon. This tension results in a "tendency" to turn to the meaning and it is "released" (*entspannt*) when the meaning of the sensuous sign is attained.

The experience of a sensuous sign is thus linked with the experience of a "demand" (*Zumutung*). Here, Husserl comes very close to the doctrine of the contemporary French linguist Todorov, who describes a signified which is referred to by the signifier in the experience of a "lack" (*manque*) which awakens a tendency.<sup>5</sup> As it is well known, Lacan takes this lack of and search for meaningful objects to be proper not only to the experience of lingual signifiers but also to the working and articulation of unconscious desires. What differentiates Husserl from both Todorov and Lacan is, however, that he pretends that this experience of a lack or of a demand has its origin in a subjective *will*. A sensuous sign is deliberately bestowed with a meaning in such a way that the experience of the sensuous sign demands its meaning-complement. In Husserl's own terminology: To the "will" (*Wollen*) to express a meaning in a sensuous sign corresponds the ob-

ligation that this sensuous sign should (*Sollen*) point to its meaning. Put in another way, the pointing of a sign derives from a meaning-intention which goes together with a "will to say." Such a way of deriving the "significance" of a sign from a former voluntary decision to express a thought by means of a sensuous sign is certainly problematic in the case of the lingual sign. We shall see later, however, that Husserl's position is more subtle and that, in the case of lingual signs, he distinguishes between different ways in which one can undergo and satisfy a demand in the sensuous experience of a word.

This analysis of the different elements entering into the experience of a genuine sign, as it is carried out in the text from 1914, often uses *memorial signs* as typical examples. This is not surprising at all because memorial signs illustrate nicely indeed how a genuine sign (e.g. a knot in the handkerchief) is brought about by a will (to remember such and such) and consequently leads to the recognition of this particular will whenever it is experienced. In memorial signs just as in the understanding of all other genuine signs we have a "significative intention" (intentionally referring to an object or state of affairs) intertwined with a "signitive intention" (pointing to the meaning of the sign-phenomenon) and we have also an arbitrary sign, deliberately brought about, which functions as a medium allowing this meaning-intention to be expressed or understood. What is surprising rather is that the First Investigation considers memorial signs, signals, and the like to be indications instead of genuine signs.

It is true, as Husserl convincingly observes in 1914, that genuine signs are used as mere indications when their meaning-force vanishes. We are all familiar with traffic signals which through repeated use become directly referring indications, and we all fall prey to labels which are not meant to provide any information about a particular sort of product but just indicate directly a consumer's paradise. But this is not what Husserl has in mind when he regards memorial signs, signals, marks, etc. as indications. The reason for this must be sought in the fact that the *Logical Investigations* consider to be an indication whatever is not a (lingual) expression. In such lingual expressions the sensuous sign and the meaning belonging to it are much more intimately linked than in the case of memorial signs and the like. According to *Logical Investigations* there is a strict parallelism between the articulation of lingual signs and meaning, between grammatical forms and forms or categories of thought. This parallelism almost amounts to a fusion when the First Investigation says that there is only one lingual sign (or rather one combination of signs) which can adequately express

5. T. Todorov, "Signe," in D. Ducrot and T. Todorov, *Dictionnaire encyclopédique des sciences du langage* (Paris, 1972), pp. 131-38.



a meaning: "... It is the one, uniquely adequate way of expressing... its meaning" (§11). No knot in a handkerchief can ever dream of serving its meaning so well and thus making itself absolutely irreplaceable!

## 2. LINGUAL SIGNS

The texts written in 1914 are remarkably attentive to the distinction and difference between non-lingual genuine signs and lingual genuine signs. This difference is occasionally given a terminological fixation in the form of the distinction between the (non-lingual) "signum" and the (lingual) "verbum." The *Logical Investigations*, quite to the contrary, neglect this difference and thus also the specificity of lingual signs, because they blankly identify genuine, i.e. meaningful, signs with lingual expressions. "Expressions," according to the First Investigation, result from the *will* to sensuously *express* and communicate a *thought* about something primarily by means of speech (§5). Such linguistically expressive, sensuous signs not only signify in virtue of a meaning, they also form an intimate unity with their meaning. Husserl says that in this case the sign and its meaning are "phenomenally one" (§5) and I would add that they are also formally and even logically one. "Phenomenal unity" means that meaning and sensuous word are given together and experienced as forming a unity which is not fortuitous but necessary. Husserl is, of course, aware of exceptional cases where we have a word and are still searching for its meaning. Such cases, however, do not harm his thesis that the unitary joined presence of word and meaning forms a minimal condition for all meaningful speech. Such an understanding of the meaningful sign presupposes a strict correspondence between the inner presence of meaning and its outer re-presentation by the word.

It becomes particularly questionable whether such a correspondence can be found in language when one moves from words to larger fragments of discourse or text. According to Derrida's analysis, such a correspondence is typical of a "Metaphysics of Presence" insofar as it starts from a metaphysical opposition between inner and outer reality and understands this distinction in terms of different modes of presence. Husserl actually goes beyond this *phenomenal* unity and states that there is a formal or *logical* unity between word and meaning. Such a thesis is at work in Husserl's contention that elementary logical forms of meaning (e.g. the subject of a predicative sentence) are mirrored in elementary grammatical forms of lingual signs and that all combinations and modifications on the grammatical level must have their correlate (and even their foundation) in the logical forms of

thought or meaning. Such a strictly isomorphic correspondence between meaning and lingual sign can be taken as faulted where lingual signs allow for a further analysis into more elementary particles than does the corresponding meaning. To phonemes for example there correspond no correlative meaning-elements; but this does not imply that they are meaningless, as Husserl, by virtue of his thesis, is forced to conclude.

This parallelism or isomorphic correspondence between meaning and word can be shown to rest on metaphysical grounds when it is related to the even more basic thesis concerning a pretended parallelism between the logical forms (or categories) of thought and the ontological forms of actually existing objects. Real objects owe their formal-ontological articulations to the formal-logical categories of the thought which intentionally refers to them. In language this intentional referring is accomplished by means of lingual signs, and these lingual signs therefore must faithfully mirror the logical forms of the meaning which makes them refer to real objects. In such an "ideal language" the isomorphic correspondence between the lingual signs and the real object to which it refers rests on the primacy of the logical forms which are mirrored by both, the ontological forms and the lingual forms.<sup>6</sup>

Distinguishing between "signum" and "verbum," between non-lingual and lingual genuine signs, the "Texts from 1914" also devote more attention to what distinguishes lingual expressions from other sorts of genuine signs. This further determination of lingual signs does not, however, change much with regard to Husserl's notion of an ideal language as it was at work already in the *Logical Investigations*. In the later texts, the main emphasis lies on the development of the insight that all lingual signs are "categorially formed." This insight can be understood, on the one hand, as a further explication of what the *Logical Investigations* state about an isomorphic correspondence between expressive signs and their meaning. On the other hand, this insight is developed also in the framework of Husserl's new analysis of the nature of genuine signs. In the first approach of the properly lingual sign one is led to a new investigation concerning the formal correspondence between the expressive sign and the object expressed, especially in the case of perceptual judgments (*Wahrnehmungsurteil*). This new analysis of the categorial articulation of both the lingual sign and the signified objective referent is carried out together with a new

6. For a further analysis of this system of correspondences underlying Husserl's understanding of language, cf. R. Bernet, "Logik und Phänomenologie in Husserl's *Lehre von der Wahrheit*," pp. 72-89.



description of the synthesis of fulfillment. This is not particularly surprising, since lingual signifying is said to attain its full "realization" only in intuitive fulfillment. We cannot develop this point any further in the context of this paper,<sup>7</sup> because we have deliberately excluded the examination of intentional reference and its possible intuitive fulfillment from our scope.

What we can easily do, however, is to develop the second approach where the specificity of the lingual sign is brought out in contrast to other forms of genuine signs. In all genuine signs the experience of the sensuously given sign comprehends two elements that are inseparably linked: the awareness of the sign-phenomenon and the awareness of its pointing to the intentional meaning. The specificity of *lingual* genuine signs manifests itself in both elements: (1) Already the *sensuous sign-phenomenon* bears the trace of a categorial formation. This categorial articulation is visible from the fact that a word is always noticed in function of other words. Punctuation for example seems to me to be such a categorial form proper to the lingual sign-phenomenon. (2) The pointing of a lingual sign-phenomenon also and even more obviously comprises categorial forms. In my opinion this is to say, for example, that a lingual sign-phenomenon points both to "its" meaning and beyond it to other meanings yet to be expressed. The pointing proper to a lingual sign-phenomenon has an associative and discursive form and it bears, more than in the case of other signs, the trace of an awareness of a lack in all presentations of meaning, and consequently also the trace of a desire to go on writing, reading, listening, speaking. . . .

Husserl says that instead of pointing directly, as other genuine signs do, the lingual sign-phenomenon points in a categorially articulated mode. If pointing is an "intention of transition," it follows that the categorial formation of pointing is dependent on the categorial forms of both the sensuous lingual sign-phenomenon and the spiritual meaning. Lingual pointing or signifying must be categorially formed, because a lingual meaning-intention refers to an object in a determinate or qualified way. Lingual statements never simply denote an intentional referent; they always present objects *as* being such and such. It is obvious, however, that Husserl understands this categorial articulation of the object expressed by a lingual expression in terms of a logical rather than of a lingual articulation. It is the meaning-intention

which logically articulates the intentional referent and which thereby allows for categorially formed lingual expressions about this object. The categorially formed pointing of a lingual sign-phenomenon derives from the categorially formed "will to say" and from the logical articulation of what one wants to say.

Another difference between the treatment of lingual signs in the *Logical Investigations* and in the texts from 1914 is that the later texts explicitly distinguish between an "active" and a "passive" signifying, for example, between writing and reading. Surprisingly enough, these texts also stress that passive signifying, instead of being just a consequence of active signifying, is rather a necessary moment in the constitution of a lingual sign. "Active signifying" (*aktives Bezeichnen*) can mean both: the ordinary creation or institution (*Stiftung*) of a meaningful lingual sign and the deliberate production or use (*Erzeugung*) of such a sign in order to express and communicate a thought, a wish, etc. What the *Logical Investigations* call an "expression" originates in such active signifying. In 1914 Husserl still maintains that in this case meaning or at least the "practical intention" to produce a meaningful sign precedes the lingual expression. This chronological and logical anteriority of meaning concretely has the form either of a thought still in search of an adequate expression or of a vague meaning-intention which finds its fully distinct articulation only in a subsequent verbal expression.

Turning now to "passive signifying," one can, in a way, take it to be just the consequence of active signifying. This is the case in lingual exchange or communication where something needs to be said or written before one can understand it. In understanding or passive signifying the attention of the listener or the reader first goes to the sensuous sign which serves as a medium allowing for the grasp of the meaning. In personal communication this pointing or turning from the sensuous sign to the meaning is the result of a "practical demand": the speaker wants to be understood and therefore asks the listener to take the sensuously experienced sign in such and such a way, as bearer of such and such a meaning. In the texts from 1914, Husserl, however, insists that despite this priority of active signifying in actual communication, one can also speak, on a more fundamental level, of a priority of passive signifying or, as he sometimes calls it, "reading taken in a large sense." It remains true that, in the last resort, all signifying has its "origin" in an active institution of a meaningful sign, but it is also true that without the passive understanding of the meaning of this sign, the constitution of the sign remains incomplete. I think that with this remark Husserl acknowledges that genuine signifying must

7. These questions have been carefully investigated in R. Parpan, *Zeichen und Bedeutung. Eine Untersuchung zu Edmund Husserls Theorie der Sprachzeichen*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation (Heidelberg, 1984). The author of the present article owes many valuable insights to Parpan's work.



allow for both recognition and intersubjective communication. Only a sensuous sign with a meaning that can be understood, recognized and communicated functions properly as a genuine, i.e. a meaningful, sign. A meaningful sign needs to be the same in active and passive signifying, and this sameness or identity of the meaningful sign is first constituted when the (active) institution of the sign is followed by its (passive) understanding. This entails a priority of passive signifying insofar as every active signifying which has the form of speech or writing presupposes that one already understands the meaningful sign one uses. The facticity of language precedes and allows for all lingual acts. Thus Husserl holds: The intention to speak presupposes a reproductive consciousness of a signifying, and this reproductive consciousness refers backward to an ordinary consciousness of signifying which is a *passive* understanding of the sign and not an active signifying or speaking.

Coming from Husserl, this is indeed a remarkable claim. Neither the *Logical Investigations* nor most of what has been written about Husserl's philosophy of language ever since has prepared us for what looks like a hermeneutical turn in Husserl's work. I do not think, however, that what is introduced here should be taken as the outlines of a new phenomenology of language which would contradict the analysis of the *Logical Investigations*. It seems rather to me that Husserl here investigates for the first time the background which allows for what the *Logical Investigations* state about the subjective will to speak and its expression or realization in language. Husserl does not turn away from his understanding of speech acts as voluntary acts and even as actions with a practical purpose or "demand." He rather states that such a deliberate lingual action comes out of an underlying, passive familiarity with language. Nor does Husserl turn away from his understanding of speech acts as acts originating from a subject. He rather suggests that the subject making a statement always already is part of a social community sharing the same lingual signs. Finally, Husserl does not even give up the idea that there must be such a thing as an origin of language. However, he carefully distinguishes between creating lingual signs and using them according to their original meaning in order to produce a statement. To speak meaningfully one must understand what one says, one must correctly use a pre-given language instead of arbitrarily shaping a new, private one. To speak (*sprechen*) is always to repeat another's words (*nach-sprechen*) for one's own sake. For Husserl it is always a subject which speaks, but it speaks and realizes the goal it pursues when speaking by making language speak through itself or even in its place.

In a way, Husserl thus shows himself to be prepared to accept Heidegger's statement that it is language itself which speaks (*Die Sprache spricht*). This is the case when, as Husserl says, it is not a person but the sensuous lingual sign which demands of itself that one turn to its meaning (*das Zeichen muel mir rein von sich aus zu*). This demand of the lingual sign, however, still addresses itself to a person or at least to a subject which can understand it. Husserl also insists that this anonymous demand by a sign must not be taken to be the most fundamental way in which lingual signs signify. Far from revealing the true nature of language, this case rather derives from the more basic case where, in active signifying, the sensuous sign-phenomenon is made to point to its meaning by a speaking or writing subject. In such a case understanding, the turning from the sensuous sign to its meaning goes together with the awareness that one does so and must do so in order to meet the speaker's will expressed by means of this sensuous sign.

This happens in those forms of lingual communication in which one person actually addresses another person with the practical demand to pay attention to what one wants to say. More common, however, is the case of lingual communication in which one understands a statement, that is, in which one turns from the sensuous sign to its meaning, without being explicitly asked to do so by the author of the statement. The turning from the sensuous sign to the meaning has here the form of a "blind tendency" which seems to be based on the familiarity one has with the correct use of a system of meaningful lingual signs. According to Husserl this blind tendency, however, goes together with and derives from the implicit awareness of a somewhat personal demand. Husserl says that this is shown first by the fact that this tendency is not a mere being-carried-away by the sign (*blosses Fortgezogensein*), since it includes also the implicit awareness of an obligation that does not originate in the sensuous sign itself. Husserl's second argument in favor of the implicitly personal character of the demand made by the sensuous lingual sign is that whenever one understands a spoken or written statement, the understanding goes together with an implicit and possibly entirely indeterminate reference to its author.

I think there is little to object to in Husserl's first argument if the argument is taken to emphasize that a lingual sign is a sign with meaning. It is true, indeed, that the signifying and intentional referring of a lingual sign is not a matter of associative contiguity or resemblance. A sign which leads directly to the signified without any understanding of what it means is an indication rather than a genuine sign. The



problem with the first and especially with the second argument is whether, in order to understand the meaningful signifying of a sensuous word, sentence, or text, an implicit awareness of the author is required. I do not doubt, of course, that there is no spoken word where there is no speaker, and that there is no text where there is no author. I think, however, that the interest in the speaker or author, as implicit as it may be, is a matter of the causal origin of the spoken word or of the text rather than a matter of understanding its meaning. Husserl's position presupposes that there are no other forms of active signifying than those originating in a personal demand.

I would say, to the contrary, that in most cases active signifying—and also most understanding thereof—is impersonal. Our ordinary way of speaking and listening, writing and reading, is often just a matter of giving in to the requirements of a linguistic code, of a literary genus, of a habitual chain of words. In these cases lingual signs are used meaningfully, but we are spoken by language rather than speaking it. One could object that what Husserl had in mind was not chatter but scientific speech, in which one is personally responsible for what one says and understands. But if "science" means "objective science," then, as Husserl has also taught us, it is impersonal. In science it is nobody rather than somebody, it is science rather than the scientist who speaks. In objective science, statements are said to be true in virtue of the objective states of affairs they refer to rather than in virtue of the personal credit the speaker enjoys. Only the language of transcendental phenomenology, "transcendentalese," as Thomas Prüfer and Robert Sokolowski call it, is a form of language which both is scientific and originates in subjective responsibility and thus in a subjective mode of actively and passively signifying.

The insight that most speech acts are impersonal does not, of course, exclude the existence of *personal* speech acts as well. Likewise the insight that many forms of communication are impersonal does not exclude the existence of *personal* communication. *Personal communication* relies on the exchange of personal speech acts, more precisely, on an exchange between active and passive personal signifying. In this case too, the texts from 1914 improve remarkably on the analysis proposed in *Logical Investigations*. The First Investigation takes personal communication to be the normal function of lingual expressions (§7). Such lingual communication is more than a speaker showing the correct use of a lingual sign to the listener, or a listener showing the speaker that they both share the same linguistic code. In lingual communication the speaker also intends more than just bringing about a modification in the behavior of the listener or calling into existence

a new state of affairs. He strives to be understood by the listener in what he says and expects an agreement or disagreement concerning whether what he says is correct or not. Lingual communication presupposes both the will to make oneself understood and the readiness to understand what the other wants to say. The sensuous lingual sign is not given in exactly the same way to the speaker and the listener (Husserl says that in the listener the grasp of the sign precedes the grasp of the meaning and that in the speaker the grasp of the sign follows the grasp of the meaning), but it must be actually and materially present to both of them. It is by means of physical signs that lingual communication is made possible, that the speaker's active signifying and the listener's passive signifying can be made to share the same meaning.

So far the First Investigation and the texts from 1914 agree in their description of personal, lingual communication. Their disagreement concerns the analysis of how the sensuous experience of a physical lingual sign allows the listener to understand what the speaker wants to say. According to the First Investigation, this sign serves the speaker to "intimate" (*Kundgabe*) what he has in mind and allows the listener to grasp what is thus intimated (*Kundnahme*) (§7). What is problematic in this analysis is mainly Husserl's contention that in such an intimation the lingual sign functions in the manner not of a genuine sign but of an indication. It is obvious, however, that the speaker's words neither make the addressee notice directly what they refer to nor do they make him believe, by way of causal inference, in the existence of some mental process going on in the speaker's mind. It is obvious also that if this happened, it would not count as an understanding of the speaker's statement by the listener. Instead of proving this obviously strange analysis to be wrong, one needs rather to come to understand how Husserl could ever take it into consideration. I think that the reason for this is that according to the *Logical Investigations* a lingual sign, which cannot signify without being present physically, and whose significance does not proceed from a directly accessible will to speak, must be an indication rather than an expression. This is the case in verbal communication, where the physical presence of the sign is required to grant access to the speaker's mental states. For the listener, the perception of the physical lingual sign and the grasp of the meaning-intention from which it proceeds are not "phenomenally one," and this is to say, according to the *Logical Investigations*, that their conjunction appears to the listener in the form of an indication rather than of an expression.

The strange analysis of personal lingual communication in the *Logi-*



*cal Investigations* is the consequence of a lack of means to do better. The "Texts from 1914" are more faithful to the phenomena, because Husserl now employs better means. The new means are: (1) a clearer distinction between indications and genuine signs, and (2) a new phenomenological account of how we become aware of other subjects' mental states. Signs which are not "expressions" in the sense of the *Logical Investigations* can still be genuine signs and even genuine linguistic signs, according to the texts from 1914. Passive signifying is as good as active signifying, and in lingual communication it even enjoys some priority: in order to address someone meaningfully, one must be familiar with the language one uses, one must be a member of a group sharing the same lingual idiom, and one must also care about how one is to be understood. In passive signifying the sensuous sign is given prior to its meaning, and in passive signifying occurring in the context of personal communication, the sign must be given physically, that is, in an act of perception. In this case, the perceived sensuous sign-phenomenon points to a meaning-intention and this meaning-intention is understood both as to its ideal meaning and as to its origin in someone else's life.

The second form of understanding, the awareness of another subject's mental states, is what the texts from 1914 call "empathic understanding" (*emfühlendes Verstehen*). The physical sign allows the listener to receive the intimation (*Kundnehmung*) of the speaker's meaning-intentions, but this reception is a form of "empathy" (*Empfindung*) rather than a form of indicating or natural motivation of belief. A physical sign which must exist (in order to allow for communication) must not therefore directly motivate the belief in the existence of what it refers to; it must not become an indicative sign. The physically existing genuine sign remains a genuine sign, that is, a sign with a meaning. In intersubjective communication the understanding of this meaning goes together with the empathy into or "appresentative representation" of (*vergegenwärtigende Appräsentation*) somebody else's meaning-intentions. Here Husserl puts to work his new analysis of how we understand our fellow-subject's mental processes, an analysis first developed in a course given in 1910-11 (see *Husserliana* XIII, No. 6). Personal lingual communication of meaning or, more precisely, understanding someone else's meaning-intentions, is made a particular case of "empathic re-presentation" (*emfühlende Vergegenwärtigung*).

This new account of lingual communication was made possible by the new insight that a lingual sign continues to genuinely signify even when its physical existence is required. However, this does not mean that the physical existence of the sensuous sign is always necessarily re-

quired to allow for its genuine signifying. Genuine signifying is not a property of a really existing object, it is a "functional character" referring from the sensuous sign or signifier to the signified. According to the texts from 1914, this functional character realizes itself in a twofold mental process: The actual signifying of a genuine sign requires an actual awareness of a sensuous sign-phenomenon and also of its pointing to the meaning and to the meaningfully intended object. Such an actual signifying can take place even where the sensuous sign does not really exist, i.e. where it is not given in the form of a perceptual object (and also where the intentional object significantly referred to does not exist). For a signifying actually to take place, it is enough that a sensuous sign be intuitively given, regardless of whether it is in perception or phantasy. There is no actual signifying left, however, when not only the sensuous sign but also the meaning-intention which makes it signify is a product of phantasy.

The difference becomes clear at once when one considers the following examples: I can mutely speak to myself or silently think in lingual terms. When I do so, I produce words without uttering any sound or writing any letter. Husserl says that in such a case signifying is actually taking place, but that the lingual signs which are made to signify by the silent speaker have no physical existence. Since, however, they have to be present somehow, these signs are said to be present in phantasy. This is to say that I actually speak or think by means of lingual signs which do not really exist. I work with phantasied words, or rather with sound-patterns and letters whose sensuous appearance I just imagine. It makes quite a difference when I do not actually speak to myself but rather just imagine that I speak to myself or to someone else. In this case, I work with phantasied words too, but just in imagination, without putting them to work in an actual signifying. Soliloquy consists in actually speaking to oneself by means of actually phantasied words and not at all in phantasizing that one speaks to oneself.

The analysis of soliloquy offered in the First Investigation is utterly confusing, because it neglects this distinction and presents soliloquy as a form of signifying in which "one merely conceives of himself as speaking and communicating" (§8). A second reason for discomfort with the way soliloquy is presented in the *Logical Investigations* is, of course, that soliloquy is made a privileged or "pure" form of lingual expression. This is obviously a consequence of the fact that the *Logical Investigations* consider lingual communication to include an indicative use of lingual genuine signs. Husserl says we have purely expressive signs only in soliloquy, where lingual signs are given in phantasy instead of existing materially. With the new analysis of the lingual sign



and of communication developed in 1914, there is no reason any longer to give priority to phantased signs over really existing lingual signs or to soliloquy over lingual communication. On the contrary, soliloquy, just as all other forms of active signifying, presupposes that one belongs to a social group communicating by means of a commonly shared lingual idiom. With this new analysis of the lingual sign, of communication, and of soliloquy, it also does not make much sense any longer to prove, as Derrida does in his critical interpretation of the *Logical Investigations*, that in soliloquy just as in allocution expressive and indicative signs remain "entangled" (*verflochten*). Soliloquy and allocution both work exclusively with meaningful lingual signs (i.e. "expressions") and these cannot be taken to be "indications" without losing their meaning altogether. It is true, however, that Husserl does not give enough credit to the material presence of the lingual sign (e.g. in a context) and to its capacity to produce a meaning which does not derive from a personal will.

According to Husserl's analysis, a phantased sensuous sign and a really existing sensuous sign are equally well prepared to function as a support (*Anhalt, Stütze*) for an actual meaningful signifying to take place. Signifying as a function realized in a mental state, the sign as possibly a product of phantasy—is this not to say that Husserl's new theory of the lingual sign falls prey to plain psychologism? The answer to this question must clearly be negative. It is easy to show that just as logical psychologism was crushed by Husserl's analysis of the ideality of meaning, lingual or semiotic psychologism is overcome by what Husserl calls the "irreality" or even the "ideality" of the sensuous lingual sign. The First Investigation already emphasizes the ideality of the sensuous expression, without, however, making clear how something can at the same time be both sensuously given and ideal (§11). The ideality of meaning and the ideality of the sensuous lingual sign both refer to their capacity to be identically recognized in different circumstances and by different persons. "Ideality" is an epistemological rather than a metaphysical category; it means identity recognized in different circumstances rather than a mode of being which is separated from real being. Sensuous signs are "ideal" or "irreal" if they always function in the same way and are recognized or assumed to do so. Sensuous signs must be "ideal" or "irreal" in order to point to the same meaning in different circumstances and for different persons. There arises, however, a difficulty in understanding how a sensuous sign, at the same time and in the same respect, can be both ideal-identical and factually individuated, irreal and empirically existing. This is why contemporary linguistics distinguishes between the sign as a

"type" and the sign as "token." Different empirical signs or "tokens" can be recognized as pointing to the same meaning insofar as they are recognized to be the same; that is to say, recognized as instances of the same ideal sign or "type."

The "Texts from 1914" deal with this ideality of the sensuous sign much more carefully than do the *Logical Investigations*. They differentiate clearly between the logical ideality of meaning and the properly lingual ideality of the sensuous lingual signs. They also distinguish different levels in the ideality of the lingual sign. The invariance of a sensuous pattern is a first form of ideality and it can best be illustrated by the case of a phoneme whose identity remains unaffected by the variance of the pitch, force, etc. of the physical sound. Another form of ideality is reached when a word is taken to be the same whether it is given in oral or in written form. With regard to the ideality of the lingual sign the most difficult question however concerns the relation between the sensuous sign *qua* empirical "token" and *qua* ideal "type." On this question too, the texts from 1914 shed new light. In opposition to the *Logical Investigations*, the relation between "type" and "token" is no longer understood to have the form of a relation between an essence and its individual instance. Husserl now argues that just as no abstract universalization is required to grasp an ideal meaning,<sup>8</sup> so the sensuous type too is reached without submitting manifold sensuous "tokens" to a process of eidetic variation. The ideal "type" of a sensuous word does not exist in itself, independently of an empirically given, individual "token." Rather, it is grasped at once whenever a concrete sensuous sign is experienced. The ideality of the sensuous sign thus appears as a minimal requirement for the meaningful signifying of lingual signs rather than as the consequence of a metaphysical approach to language. Metaphysical presuppositions do play a decisive role, however, in Husserl's account of the isomorphic correspondence between the categorial articulation of the sensuous lingual sign and of the intentionally referring meaning. But this is a matter which concerns ideal language and not the ideality of lingual signs.

Again and again, the anticipation of ideal language, and the understanding of logical thought it presupposes, have appeared to guide Husserl's approach to the phenomenon of the sign. Despite the substantial progress accomplished by the "Texts of 1914," these texts share and even develop further the hidden presuppositions of the

8. The position of the *Logical Investigations*, in which the identity of a meaning is assimilated to the logical form of a species as essence, is criticized by Husserl himself as early as 1908; cf. R. Bernet, "Bedeutung und intentionales Bewusstsein," pp. 48–58.



First Investigation. Thus, even though the "Texts of 1914" deprive Derrida of some of his arguments, his main charge is given new evidence. Signs continue to function as an extension of self-present, voluntary thought. The refinement of Husserl's analysis of the sign paradoxically makes it more and more difficult to understand the positive contribution made by the sign: if the materiality of the sensuous sign is reduced to its phenomenological appearance, if this appearance of the sensuous sign is understood as a mere support of its pointing to the meaning, if this pointing to the meaning is said to depend on the structure of the meaning-intention, and if this meaning-intention is understood as an act of intentional and possibly also categorial representation of an object, then the sign cannot present intentional thought with anything original. It can at best help to preserve and transmit thought, but it does not, as Kant said of the symbol, give rise to thought. It is a mere instrument in the hands of self-centered thought.

When he tries to get hold of the origin of language and when he locates this origin in logical thought, Husserl abandons the grounds of a properly phenomenological approach to language. Despite the many valuable and lasting results to be found in Husserl's analysis of the signitive relation between the signifier and the signified, the manifold modes of appearing of the sign are neglected in favor of a construction of the logical function and the mental use of the sign. Husserl's account of the sign both opens and closes a phenomenological interrogation of the logos pertaining to the phenomenon of language and of the way in which language discloses other phenomena.